



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## II.—*Dante's Paradiso: Cantos XXIV-XXVI.*

By EDWARD L. WALTER, PH. D.,

PROFESSOR OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN, ANN ARBOR, MICH.

The xxivth, xxvth and xxvith books of the 'Paradiso' consist chiefly of what has always been something of a puzzle to me, the examination of DANTE by PETER, JAMES and JOHN, on Faith, Hope and Love. The allegory of the 'Divina Commedia,' clear enough in its main outlines, becomes matter for endless discussion as soon as we descend into details, but nowhere else, so far as I have observed, is there any difficulty in interpreting the general significance of so large a body of verse as these three books, if we take the literal sense, or in adapting it to some one theory, if we take the allegorical sense. The fact that I do not find any discussion of this puzzling examination in the DANTE literature accessible to me, has made me somewhat fearful of committing an offense very common in the study of all masterpieces in all literatures; but I console myself by the reflection, that in the vast number of DANTE students who have found difficulties where none existed, I should feel myself in good company.

Let me briefly recall the situation which seems to me in need of explanation. DANTE has passed through the horrors of Hell, he has climbed the hill of Purgatory, he has seen the temporal and the eternal fires, he has walked in the earthly Paradise, he has drunk of Lethe and Eunoe, after having suffered the reproaches of BEATRICE and gazed upon the mystic procession of the Church. He has ascended into the heavens, passing from one heaven to another by the sweet power which comes from the eyes of BEATRICE, and has now reached the heaven of the fixed stars, where abide the Apostles and Saints of the Old and New Testaments. The Divine Rose, which had been on earth the hostelry of our desire, had followed into the Empyrean its own seed, and after it each white gleam had reached upward with its summit to reveal to the dazzled poet its deep affection for MARY. Thus stretching out towards the Mother of Christ, they sung in seraphic tones, "Regina Coeli."

Then BEATRICE, his faithful guide through the glories of heaven, beseeches the company elect to the great supper of the Lamb benedight, to bedew somewhat him to whom the Grace

of God has given a foretaste of what falls from their tables. The flames revolve in ecstasy, and from one of the blessed carols comes forth a happy fire of supreme brightness. Him, the light of ST. PETER, BEATRICE implores to examine DANTE on points light and grave concerning the faith by means of which he walked upon the seawater.

“If he love well, and hope well, and believe,  
From thee 'tis hid not; for thou hast thy sight  
There where depicted everything is seen.  
But since this kingdom has made citizens  
By means of the true faith, to glorify it  
'Tis well he have the chance to speak thereof.”

Then PETER asks the poet what is faith, why PAUL defines it as the substance of things hoped for, whether he has it in his possession, whence he obtained it, what authorizes him to consider the Old and New Testaments as divine, what assured him that the miracles there recounted ever took place, and finally asks him to state what he believes. When DANTE had finished his confession, the apostolic light gives him its benediction, even as a lord embraces his servant from whom he hears what pleaseth him. Into the faith that maketh all souls known to God, thus entered DANTE.

Now the baron who draws so many pilgrims to Galicia, left the group whence PETER had come, and was besought by BEATRICE to examine the poet concerning hope. So JAMES asks what hope is, what degree of hope was his, whence he obtained it, and what he hopes for. “*Sperant in te*” resounded from on high, and all the heavenly carols answered responsive to the words.

Now issued from that same band a light of such exceeding brightness that the poet became as one who by seeing the sun doth become sightless. It was the light of him who was elected from the cross to the great office. JOHN asks him to what his soul is aimed, who aimed it at such a target, if other cords besides draw him to God. At his satisfactory answer, a sweet song resounded throughout heaven, “Holy, Holy, Holy!” and the radiance of BEATRICE chased from before his eyes every mote, and he saw better than before. Now from the light of the first soul that ever was created, from the light of Adam, he besought an answer to the doubts that beset him concerning divers matters, and his doubts were set at rest. Then began all Paradise to sing, “Glory, glory, glory to Father, Son and

Spirit," and the melody made the poet inebriate, forcing its way into the soul by sight as well as by hearing, for it seemed a smile of the universe. There follow upon this the magnificent denunciations by PETER of the corruptions of the Holy See, in which I find no special difficulty. All that follows seems to me to enter more easily into the general scheme of the poem than these examinations on theological dogmas.

For consider; DANTE is in Heaven; as far as any knowledge of these things is necessary to enter there, his presence alone was sufficient evidence of his orthodoxy. Moreover, the faithful, even in Purgatory, are practically secure against all assaults of spiritual enemies; even they who in Ante-Purgatory were waiting until the time should arrive when should begin the work proper of their purification, delayed by their contumacy while in life, were guarded at night by two angels, who put to flight the serpent that gave to Eve the bitter food. Even those who in the first circle of Purgatory are purified of their pride, have no need to pray for themselves, that they be delivered from temptation, but only for them whom they have left behind. If the sufferers in Purgatory were safe, how much more the blessed in Paradise, who enjoy the sight of God himself?

DANTE, to be sure, is in the literal sense, a living man among the dead, and as such may perhaps be thought subject to temptation when he shall return to earth. But he is one who had by the grace of God a foretaste of what falls from the table of the the company elect to the great supper of the Lamb benedight, who as the Emperor of Heaven had willed, had found himself face to face with His Counts in the most secret chamber. Moreover, nearly all those with whom he speaks in Purgatory and Paradise, MANFRED, BUONCONTE, GUINICELLI, JUSTINIAN, CACCIAGUIDA, assume the return of DANTE to the world after the completion of his tremendous journey, with purified moral perceptions as well as with purified mental vision.

It is too repeatedly affirmed that there is no need in Paradise of question and answer, as far as the saints are concerned.

"Not that our knowledge may be greater made  
By speech of thine, but to accustom thee  
To tell thy thirst, that we may give thee drink,"

says BEATRICE, and DANTE thereupon makes his request of CACCIAGUIDA, to whom all things contingent are visible in the eternal aspect, concerning his future life. And in the very passage I am discussing, BEATRICE declares that from

ST. PETER is not hidden if DANTE love well, hope well and believe, but he must be given the means to speak of the true faith, which makes citizens of Paradise. It might seem at first sight as if this answered the question, as far at least as the literal sense was concerned, but if so, it is an answer which is itself in need of an interpretation, like too many of the solutions we get in this world to more important and puzzling problems than this. For it is hardly a satisfactory answer to my wonder at this strange demand, to expound in Heaven itself some rather difficult theological questions, a demand addressed to a living man, brought by the special and astounding grace of God through the torments of Hell and the pains of Purgatory and the lower spheres of Heaven, until he is ready to enter into the very presence of God Himself,—addressed to such a man by beatified creatures who see by direct vision of the face of God, not only the fullness of those virtues of which they ask DANTE to tell, but also what DANTE himself will answer to their demand; it is no satisfactory answer to my wonder, to say that they want to give him a chance to tell what he knows. When we ask questions, not for our own information, but that another may speak, it must be for his good, or at least that some good may come to some other being or to some cause. DANTE did not need this chance because of any doubt concerning his progress in the heavenly regions, for this was practically assured. That his “immense affection” was somewhat bedewed from that fount whence the saints always drink, by this chance to affirm his faith, hope and love, cannot be doubtful after the prayer of BEATRICE; but—“somewhat bedewed,” was it worth while to spend three books in reciting what should be only “somewhat” gratifying to his immense affection?

But is there any cause for the sake of which it might seem more probable that this declaration was desirable? The glory of God, no doubt, requires mortals always to ascribe praise to him, even in Heaven, but there again the mere fact of the presence of a mortal amid the splendors of Heaven, is a greater proof of His glory than can possibly be given by spending three books in defining some theological conceptions, of which the clear understanding must first have been furnished him, in part at least, by the very mediation of those who put the questions to him. The same objection applies to supposing that the joy of the saints who hear him declare his faith, hope and love, can be the cause of their questions and of his declarations. That

their joy is greater from hearing him, must be supposed, but that it is so much greater as to make it natural to spend three books in recounting an examination, the result of which they knew perfectly well beforehand, is hard to believe. Nor is it easy to imagine any other cause for it.

These then are some of the difficulties which present themselves to me when I try to understand the place these three books hold in the plan of the poem, when taken in the literal sense. But if they can be explained satisfactorily in connection with the allegorical teaching that the poem was primarily intended to convey, it is a matter of no very great importance if they do not fit in exactly with the literal sense. For though it is to be remembered that the literal must precede and include the allegorical sense, as DANTE himself tells us in the 'Convito,' it is impossible to hold any poet so strictly to account in a poem of so great a length as not to allow of inconsistencies which are not too gross, even of an occasional lapse of memory, if the essential idea is not too sharply contradicted. Moreover, in the allegories of some of DANTE'S masters, notably of RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR and of ST. AUGUSTINE, as is evident from the elaborate analyses of the 'De Quantitate Animæ' and of the 'De Contemplatione' of the one and of the other, given by LUBIN in his edition of the 'Commedia,' there is a certain fluidity of conception which allowed greater variety of presentation than would be considered excusable by the more rigid notions of consistency of our day. This was even a matter of theory; ST. AUGUSTINE in the 'Confessions' expressly says that it can be argued properly that the inspired authors have foreseen all the truth that can be drawn from the Scriptures, or even if the authors themselves have not seen it, the spirit that inspired them has foreseen it. And DANTE himself says in the 'Vita Nuova,' where he has explained the persistent recurrence of the number nine in connection with BEATRICE, as indicating that she was a miracle wrought by the Trinity, the square of which is nine, that perhaps others may see a more subtle reason, but that this satisfies him. It is obvious that this more subtle reason, if found, would not discredit in his judgment the explanation which he had already offered.

We must not be surprised then if the allegory of the 'Divine Comedy' assumes a different aspect, according to the position of him who views it. But some one of the several theories as to the correct interpretation of the allegory of the poem should

be able satisfactorily to explain this discussion of the theological virtues, held in Heaven itself between the saints who needed no enlightenment, and DANTE, who also, as they knew perfectly well, needed no enlightenment, at whose answers the heavenly hosts, to whom nothing is contingent, who knew what they would be before they were given, sang hymns of glory and praise.

It can hardly be expected that I shall discuss at any length the difficult problem of the proper understanding of the allegory which is contained in the 'Commedia.' A thorough discussion would demand, not only more time and patience on the part of those who hear me than I am bold enough to ask for, but also more erudition and a keener power of discrimination than I possess. But something must be said, if only as a guide in the interpretation of the passage I am discussing.

In the first place, what is an allegory? It is important to remember that for the purpose of this paper we do not so much need to know what the modern and, as we probably flatter ourselves, more correct use of the word is, but what DANTE himself means by the term. The word allegorical is used by DANTE in his letter to CAN GRANDE to include all the senses except the literal which can be found in any passage or incident. It is somewhat significant also, when we consider his relations to BONAVENTURA and HUGH and RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR, that he calls these senses *mystici sensus*, mystic meanings.

But allegory had for DANTE a peculiar meaning of its own, in addition to the general meaning which he gives it. He does not define it in either sense further than to say that it comes from the Greek *'Αλλοιός*, meaning different. Nor is his use of the word sufficient to make his meaning perfectly clear. The beginning of the CXIVth Psalm, so well known to DANTE students, "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion," is interpreted to mean by allegory our redemption by Christ, that is, one fact, our redemption by Christ, is signified by another fact, the departure of Israel out of Egypt. The moral sense of the same passage he declares to be the turning of our souls from the mourning and misery of sin to a state of grace, that is, we are enjoined to take a certain course of action by being told that another, which we are expected to see was analogous, was taken formerly by somebody else. The anagogical sense he declares to be the departure of a blessed

soul from the slavery of this corruption to the liberty of eternal glory, that is, the glorious end that awaits all the faithful is revealed to us by telling us the historical fact of the final departure of an enslaved people out of Egypt. Here, as before, we are expected to see the analogy for ourselves.

It is plain that DANTE, even if he recognizes a special meaning to the term allegory, uses it, or at least would not hesitate to use it, to include conceptions so far apart as the communication of one fact by another, the inculcation of moral teaching by a historical fact, and an expression of our hopes and aspirations by the same historical fact, and that in his opinion all these diverse senses could properly be discovered or put into the same passage or book. It is easy to laugh at some of the explanations given of DANTE'S great poem, and indeed nothing can be further from our modern ways of thinking and expressing our thoughts than such far-fetched analogies and the kind of ingenuity needed to find them, but the ease of our laughter is not always proportioned to the justness of its cause. I know of nothing more instructive in this respect in recent DANTE literature than the pages used by LUBIN in the studies prefixed to his edition of the 'Commedia' in giving a detailed account of some of the mediæval treatises which might be expected to throw some light on the matter. Indeed he finds even in late classic times, in MACROBIUS and FULGENTIUS, the beginnings of this extravagant use of allegory, but he finds his best examples in the Church Fathers, especially the mystics. He finds almost an absolute correspondence between the 'De contemplatione' of RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR and the 'Commedia,' so that it seems almost as if he supposes that DANTE drew from the mystic the whole plan of his poem. The correspondence does not seem so perfect to me as to him, but he has shown enough to make it clear that this sort of allegory commended itself to DANTE'S taste, which was also plain enough from the letter to CAN GRANDE, where he refers to this, and to treatises of ST. BERNARD and ST. AUGUSTINE, as sufficient to shut the mouths of those who object to his treating of such high matters.

Now if the 'Convito' contains much, if even the 'Vita Nuova' contains some things, which show this tendency to interpret all that is done or said, all that happens or has happened, as intended to convey some subtle lesson to man, it is to be expected that in the most important work of DANTE'S life he should have clothed the lessons he sought to give in the mystic



dress, so familiar and dear to him. There are indications that he did not suppose that the allegory would be clear in all its details to everybody; if the main lesson was clear, and of that there can be no doubt, he could safely trust to the more cultivated part of his readers, to whom teaching given in this way was a familiar thing, to discover the more recondite lessons that were hidden there.

"Here, Reader, fix thine eyes well on the truth,  
For now indeed so subtle is the veil,  
Surely to penetrate within is easy."

This he says, when in Ante-Purgatory the Angels descend to protect the penitent souls from the serpent which came 'twixt grass and flowers. And in fact it is not very difficult to see here that the serpent represents the tempter, and the Angels the divine grace and love which guard from his attack. But even here, so foreign is the very conception to our modern notions, that some commentators, not very many, 'tis true, have tried to give the passage a meaning directly contrary to the obvious one, to make DANTE tell us that the allegory here is so difficult that it can easily be overlooked. But if the veil of allegory is here so thin, in the opinion of the poet, it is evident that he knows that it is not everywhere so easily pierced.

The main lesson of the 'Commedia' is easy to perceive, indeed it is hard to overlook it, for any attentive reader, even without the help that DANTE himself gives us, but it is interesting to hear the poet tell us in his letter to CAN GRANDE, what he intended or hoped to accomplish by this great and crowning labor of his life. The subject of the book, he tells us, is, taken allegorically, man, as, by merit or demerit through freedom of the will, he becomes subject to the justice of reward and punishment. The end of the work, both taken as a whole, and of the 'Paradiso' in particular, is to remove those who live in this life from the state of misery and lead them to a state of felicity. Most of the interpretations of the 'Commedia' go back naturally to this declaration; so far as I know, only one is not founded on it, and that is the political one of ROSSETTI and AROUX. I only know this at second hand, but it is hard to believe that there are any of the more intelligent DANTE students who now hold that the political teaching of the poem, in the ordinary sense of the word at least, is anything more than secondary and incidental. I have not been able to learn in detail even what the theory is, and thus do not know the more

or less plausible grounds for assertions which are in such flagrant opposition, not only to the most obvious meaning of the poem, but to the practically unanimous interpretation of all the commentators from BOCCACCIO down to the beginning of this century. In any case, it is impossible for me to conceive, in the absence of distinct accounts of what their speculation is, the part that Paradise can play in their scheme. If it represents the universal power of the Emperor, and the unquestioned supremacy of Ghibelline principles, then perhaps these declarations concerning the faith could be supposed to represent taking the oath of allegiance, or something of the sort, which might seem important enough to warrant spending some time to describe them. But while it might be possible to find an explanation which would harmonize pretty well with the situation, the theory itself is so wild that it is hardly worth while to spend any time over it.

It is necessary to recur to DANTE's own explanation of his purpose. But how shall we explain the explanation? I do not need to consider at any length the theory that the poet means simply to warn men of the consequences of vice, to allure men by the rewards of virtue, so that they shall choose the service of God and desert the service of the Devil. Any acquaintance, even the most superficial, with the 'Convito' and the 'Vita Nuova' and the 'Canzoniere' makes any such position untenable. That this is taught is of course beyond question, but that this only is taught, can be believed only by him who does not know or has forgotten that DANTE means by allegory something more than a moral tale; certainly in DANTE's own mind his great poem was not simply a more sublime "Shepherd of Salisbury plain." It is certain that by some critics it is held a defect that DANTE has tried to put into the 'Commedia' more than a bare recital of his imaginary journey, with such wealth of insight and power of poetic form as could be properly there employed, and it is equally certain that without this narrative form, accompanied as it is by extraordinary vigor and depth of conception and execution, it could never have reached the position it holds in the world's literature, however it might have been appreciated by critics and students. But it remains true that the allegory of the 'Commedia' contains vastly more than a simple admonition to men to flee from vice and pursue virtue. But even if it were not so, the passage I am discussing is no clearer. Men would certainly not be led to feel more ardor in

the Christian life, by hearing that they were to be examined in Heaven itself on points of doctrine, as had been the hero of a tale, which however glorious, was yet but a tale.

To explain this problem, as well as most other problems in the general interpretation of the '*Divina Commedia*,' a broader and deeper scheme must be found, which shall include the moral tale certainly, but also the more mystic interpretations of DANTE'S own statement of his purpose. This broader scheme most commentators who have treated the subject at all, have found or have thought that they have found. There are some points on which the differences are not very great. There is substantial unanimity as to the office of DANTE himself in the '*Commedia*,' perhaps also as to that of the "*Donna gentil nel ciel*," and of LUCIA. As DANTE himself represents man, the reasoning animal, so the *Donna gentil* represents the Divine mercy, or prevenient grace, which moved LUCIA, or illuminating grace, to send to the rescue of the wandering poet BEATRICE, who here must, I think, be held to represent effectual grace.

But this can hardly be her office in the spheres of heaven; effectual grace has already done its work, the poet has no further need of the grace that saves, but so much the more does he need help to reach the perfect state, as described by ST. AUGUSTINE and RICHARD of ST. VICTOR, in which the soul sees by intuition those truths even which are beyond or contrary to reason, and this help is furnished by the Divine science, by Theology, which itself is but the reason of man applied to Divine things. This double office of BEATRICE is not foreign to the method of DANTE'S masters in allegory, nor is it in itself inconsistent. The higher reason—which is but another name for the science of Divine things and which, without a higher light than nature affords, could never reach the certainty attained to even by the lower reason in earthly things when this higher light is given—becomes a most efficient, an indispensable aid to the attainment of the perfect state. This is the position of the mediæval speculators, and I am not concerned with its metaphysical or theological correctness.

This identification of BEATRICE with the science of theology goes back at least as far as BENVENUTO DA IMOLA, and her identification with effectual grace dates at least as far back as BOCCACCIO, and seems to me still to explain most consistently and satisfactorily her position in the allegory. She receives the

poet from VERGIL, after his freewill has been declared free, upright and sound, and VERGIL disappears. Thus when the lower reason, which deals only with what the human powers unaided can resolve, has done its work, when the cardinal virtues, whose symbols were already seen in the four stars which shone upon the travelers at the foot of the mount of Purgatory, have become the sure possession of man, there still remains for his attainment what can be given him by the higher reason alone, he still needs to be prepared for the perfect state of contemplation, and this preparation can be given him by the science of Divine things alone. BEATRICE turns over the poet, when at last the Empyrean itself is reached, and the presence of God is to be revealed to him, to ST. BERNARD of Clairvaux, the contemplator. So the science of Divine things, which, though aided by supernatural light, must still proceed by faith and not by sight, gives way, as ST. BERNARD himself shows in the treatise referred to by DANTE, to the intelligence, to the *luce intellettuale*, which needs not to investigate, and which, when attained, leaves nothing wanting to our blessedness.

It is not necessary for my purpose to consider the significance of the other figures of the 'Commedia'; what STATIUS, MATELDA, CATO, and the other personages who seem to be connected with the allegory are intended to represent, can have very little bearing upon determining the significance in the allegory of the examination which I am discussing. So much the more need is there to fix upon the meaning to be given to the chief figure himself, to the poet who tells the tale. That he represents man is scarcely to be doubted; that this representation of man in general gives us many details which are applicable only to DANTE the poet, is beyond question. How can we reconcile these two facts, and further bring them into harmony with DANTE's oft-cited declaration, that the end of his poem was to remove living men from the state of misery, and to lead them to a state of felicity?

This end can be attained either by showing men the punishments of vice and the rewards of virtue, in which may be included, as well as the material sufferings and joys, the internal unrest and tranquillity that attend upon the pursuit of vice and virtue; or by exhortations addressed to that sense of right and wrong that may be presumed to exist in every man born and brought up under the teachings of the Christian religion; or by simply stating the way in which one has already escaped from

the slavery of misery and reached the freedom of felicity. No doubt all these methods are used in the 'Commedia'; the bare recital of what the poet saw, contains the warning and admonition; the exhortations, not numerous enough to turn the poem into a sermon, are meant to be of no slight importance in leading the reader into the ways of virtue; but the most important way, because addressed only to those who have intellectual and spiritual insight sufficiently keen to pierce through the veil of allegory which enshrouds it, is that in which is described the process by which one soul has already been purified and disposed to mount upward to the stars, and there had tarried until his desire and will were equally turned by the love that moves the sun and the other stars. This method depends for its success, not only on the insight of those with whom it is employed, but also on the clearness of the presentation.

It will not do for us to judge on this point from our own habits and opinions in respect to the use of allegory. It is not easy for us to put ourselves into the frame of mind which was so common then, and which is illustrated, to go no farther than DANTE himself, in the disposition to give his *canzoni* and sonnets a more forlorn and widowed appearance, by making his analyses precede instead of following, in his discovery of the singular frequency of the number nine in connection with BEATRICE, and in its explanation. Those who seek only for literary excellence can but be thankful that DANTE did not descend to the puerilities of personification of which mediæval literature is so full. Allegory has not flourished in literature since LESSING dealt it such a vigorous blow in the 'Laokoon,' and I certainly rejoice at it; great as is the intellectual and moral power shown in the allegory of the 'Divina Commedia,' if the poem depended upon these alone for its influence, it would long since have been lost to all but scholars and critics. "It is because," as an English critic says of another poet, "he appeals with perfect directness to the heart, the fancy and even to the ear, that he lives. If he did not do this successfully, winningly, with phrases and fancies that haunt the memory, that mingle with our musings on love and death and day and night, he would be a failure; an artist with an esoteric jargon." But the allegory is there, and a careful study of it by those who are not insensible to the other and more obvious beauties, can only increase for them its power and its beauty.

Now what gives this additional power and beauty is, in my

opinion, the extraordinary force and truth with which is set forth the mediæval theory of the process by which man is rescued from vice and sin, and carried forward until that perfect state is reached, to which it was held man could attain. Like all great ideas, so this must have contained a large element of truth to secure such universal acceptance, however its statement may have been colored by forms of expression which seem to us often misleading and are certainly obsolete.

The Empyrean in the poem must then represent the attainment of this perfect state, and the nine spheres through which the poet passes before reaching the very presence of God, the last stages of preparation for it, during which, as the mystics teach, the soul is fortified by the higher reason, the science of Divine things, until it can bear the sight of the Most High, until it can both see and know the truth which is not only beyond the lower reason, but contrary to it. This point is reached when the theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Love, have been fully grasped, when the lower reason can do no more, when all that remains to complete the perfection of the soul can be secured only by the free grace of God. Thus ST. BERNARD, who is in the 'Commedia,' as in the books of the Church Fathers, the Contemplator, the representative of the *Vita Contemplativa*, beseeches MARY for so much power that with his eyes he may uplift himself towards the uttermost salvation, that she would scatter from him every cloud of mortality, so that the chief pleasure be displayed to him. And from that time forward, what the poet saw was greater than our discourse, and even the memory yielded to such excess. The keenness of the living ray, he says, would have bewildered him, if his eyes had been but averted from it. Hence he was bolder to bear, and fixed his sight upon the Light Eternal, so that his seeing was consumed. This must mean, as I think is certain from the comparisons made by LUBIN with ST. BERNARD and RICHARD OF ST. VICTOR, that the soul which has reached the perfect state sees by direct vision the truths which by souls less advanced in Divine things must either be accepted on authority, or reached by a laborious effort of ratiocination.

Now this state has been reached, or nearly so, when, in the heaven of the fixed stars, DANTE is examined by PETER, JAMES and JOHN, on Faith, Hope and Love. And in fact, what intervenes between this scene and that where DANTE, turning in the Empyrean to inquire of BEATRICE of things concerning which

he was in suspense, beheld an old man, clad like the glorious people? After PETER's denunciations of the corruptions of the Papacy, the poet directs one last look at the earth, at the suggestion of BEATRICE, and sees its littleness, as of a petty threshing-floor. So never is the absolute littleness of earthly things so apparent as when the soul is about to be severed from them permanently, by absorption in the contemplation of Divine things. Then he ascends with his guide into the *Primum Mobile*, where he gazes upon the Angelic Hierarchy circling around the Divine centre. BEATRICE explains to him the order of that hierarchy, and its correspondence to the nine spheres of Paradise. She tells him of the creation of the angels, of the rebellion of some among them, and of their fall. All of these things are subjects with which the discursive reason cannot deal, or at best can only consider them after data which must be furnished by authority. He ascends with his guide into the *Empyrean*, to the light intellectual replete with love. No sooner had this living light flashed around him, than he perceived himself to be uplifted over his own power. Then came the new vision of the River of Light and of the Celestial Rose, which are foreshadowing prefaces of the truth, not difficult in itself, but only for him whose vision is defective. In the vastness of the Rose, his vision was not lost, but comprehended all the quantity and quality of that gladness. So the mind of him who has in his possession, by the aid of the Divine science, the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love, can, by the special permission of God, look upon the symbols even of those truths which are not possible for him to attain by direct vision as yet. When DANTE turns to ask BEATRICE for a full understanding of the splendid and profound things that are unfolded to his sight, he sees her no more; BERNARD the Contemplator has taken her place, and by his intercession DANTE looks upon the very face of God.

If this interpretation of the general plan of the '*Paradiso*,' which is essentially that of LUBIN, is correct, the explanation of the passage I am considering is not far to seek, especially taken in connection with an utterance of ST. BERNARD in the very treatise DANTE cites as an example of how heavenly themes should be handled. That we feel a greater joy at saying a thing, says BERNARD, is a proof in favor of its truth. That when the discursive reason is about to resign its office to direct vision, it should devoutly recall the truths it has discovered, is a natural

termination of its activity, not because of the joy it feels at confessing its faith, though that may be great, but because that very joy is another and crowning proof to the humble and faithful soul of the truth of what it confesses. For this purpose three books are scarcely too much, the more as there must also be painted the joy of the saints over the purification of the intellect [*Intellectus* is the word used by ST. BERNARD himself] of one more of those for whose salvation they had worked and prayed while in this mortal life. As the whole mount of Purgatory trembles when any soul, feeling itself pure, has a volition to rise upward, so the blessed spirits in the eighth heaven shout for joy, when the intellect of any man is wholly purified, and they express their joy.

The appropriateness of the examiners, especially of PETER and JOHN, is so obviously the reason of their choice, that it sufficiently explains why the examination is laid in the sphere of the fixed stars which is imagined as the abode of the Saints and the Apostles of the Old and the New Testament, rather than in the *Primum Mobile*, in which is placed the Angelic Hierarchy, and which just precedes the final surrender of faith to knowledge. What is touched on in the intervening period, moreover, concerns matters which, if not contrary to reason, are at least not attainable by reason alone. Excepting so far as enlightenment comes from Divine Grace, they are matters only of opinion, which is, according to ST. BERNARD, the least satisfactory result in the investigation of truth.

Let me resume, as briefly as I can, my explanation of these three books. The chief allegory of the 'Paradiso' I take to be the progress of the soul from active searching after truth to its secure possession by direct vision. BEATRICE is the poet's guide as long as he is searching after truth, BERNARD his intercessor to secure its direct vision. This direct vision of truth cannot be given to him who has not strengthened himself in the pursuit of those truths which can be found by the higher reason, illuminated by grace. This necessary degree of strength has been nearly reached by DANTE, when he reviews the grounds of his faith, and the joy he feels himself, as well as the joy manifested by the saints and apostles, is a crowning proof of the eternal verities he has confessed. In this way the scene in the eighth heaven seems to me to enter naturally into the scheme of the poem, and forms an important enough part of it to justify so many lines spent upon it.



I can see only two serious objections to such an explanation. It may be said that it is hard to believe that DANTE requires a knowledge of theology as a necessary prerequisite to the joys of Heaven. But in the first place, the *Vita Activa* which is thus contrasted with the *Vita Contemplativa* and must precede it, is not merely a life which busies itself with studying the discussions of the doctors; the things of God are to be sure in this view the noblest occupation of man, and as such DANTE represents himself as busied with them chiefly. But it embraces also, as AUGUSTINE says in the treatise that DANTE cites, all other acts of a virtuous life, such as are within the reach of all. All virtue prepares for the vision of God, but as there are different degrees of virtue in DANTE'S Paradise, symbolized by the different spheres, so the virtue which prepares the soul for it may, or rather must, be of different degree, if not of different kind. The soul will have to answer in such an examination only within the measure of its knowledge, and it is perhaps not too fanciful to think that the adaptation of the examination to the capacity of the examined is signified by DANTE himself, when his guide beseeches PETER to examine on points light and grave, *come ti piace*, as seemeth good to thee. But however this may be, a life which is virtuous by God's grace and in His love, is a sufficient preparation even in theological things for some place at least in the spheres of Heaven in strict accord with the teaching of DANTE'S masters.

The other objection may come from those who do not accept that interpretation of the 'Paradise' which I have given. I am not blind to what can be said against it, but that it explains satisfactorily these three books, is itself something in its favor. But aside from this, I certainly should not deny that other interpretations of the allegory may be in perfect harmony with the poet's thought; he expressly admits, as I have shown, different allegorical meanings in the same passage of the Bible. I only claim that the chief aim is distinctly religious, that political teaching and also moral teaching, so far as it can be distinguished from religious, are distinctly subordinated to religious teaching, and I confess I find it hard to understand the frame of mind of those who regard it differently. Now, as most of the great problems of the world are at bottom religious, and as no solution of these problems has ever been offered which does not contain also the solution of much that has no direct reference to religion, it is not strange that much can be justly found

there that suggests other interpretations than the religious one. But it remains true that the poem so obviously religious, written by a poet so surely of deep religious conviction, cannot be supposed to use religion as a mere covering for other things. A religious interpretation of these three books must then be sought for, and I certainly have been able to find no other which accords so well with the letter and spirit of the Sacred Poem, to which both Heaven and Earth have set their hand.